DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 179 497 SP 014 158

AUTHOR Palmatier, Robert A.
TITLE Teacher Education: An Assembly Line in Need of a Designer.
PUB DATE Nov 77
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Change; Educational Innovation; Educational Philosophy; Educational Policy; *Educational Trends; *Humanistic Education; Individualized Instruction; Learning Modules; Performance Based Teacher Education; *Program Improvement; *Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

Trends and changes in educational philosophy and policy over approximately the last 50 years are reviewed. The point is made that teacher education faculty members have neglected to consider the overall, "designer" role that they occupy, and instead have focused undue attention on the delineation of specific teacher competencies and educational objectives. Teacher education must seek to determine the whole needs of the child prior to the specification of instructional components rather than continuing to redefine, expand, and alter instructional approaches to the component parts of a student. Concrete suggestions for the evaluation of educational needs through a marketing approach, and for the improvement of teacher education programs, are given. (Author/LH)

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ED173497

TEACHER EDUCATION:

AN ASSEMBLY LINE IN NEED OF A DESIGNER

Robert A. Palmatier, Ph.D.
Professor of Elementary Education
Teacher Education Center
Northwestern State University
Natchitoches, Louisiana 71457
(318-357-4244)

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SP 014 158

Programs designed to produce professional educators have long been under fire from both within and without the educational community. Parents, undergraduate students, teachers, administrators, journalists, politicians, and professors all feel qualified to find fault. Neither the fault finders nor those responsible for professional education training programs seem able to suggest viable solutions for overcoming the problems. This is not to say that there has been no effort to improve the situation. In recent years numerous innovations have received trial runs in undergraduate and graduate education programs.

During the mid-1960's the teacher shortage and a desire to expand the population cross-section from which teachers were drawn served as motivators for the design of alternative teacher training programs. The alternatives usually included recruitment of students from the ranks of paraprofessionals and housewives and the combination of academic courses, often provided within a public school facility, with on-the-job work experiences. Many of these programs died when the teacher shortage of the 1960's quickly became the teacher surplus of the 1970's. Other special training programs turned to focus on preparation of teachers in high need subject areas like reading and/or development of knowledge and skills needed for teaching in difficult to serve areas like center city schools serving minority group populations.

The last half of the 1960's also saw teacher educators begin to speak of objectives instead of purposes or goals. The major thrust in this

innovation was to focus attention upon student learning products. Good objectives included stipulation of what performance was desired and evidence by which the teacher would know that the behavior had been achieved. The difficult task of constructing such objectives became well known to pre-service and graduate education students. However, few of these students found the time or need to continue making plans using such objectives once they became classroom teachers.

Along with behavioral objectives the concern in pre-service and inservice education shifted from teaching behaviors to affecting individual student behavior and meeting pupil learning needs. In a logical next-step movement teacher educators began, with federal funding, to experiment with individualization in the teacher training program. This led to the redesign of courses and to the rise of modular learning. In most cases modules amounted to programmed learning units with pre-and post-tests, through which students could move at their own pace. The concept did little to change program content but, at least for a time, altered the learning methods used by many teacher education students. Professor and student preferences along with reductions in federal funding support eventually caused a decline in the use of individualized module learning approaches. Questions were also raised concerning the relevancy of the content included in many of the modules.

Relevancy demands led to the next innovation; competency-based education. At first the scope included only teacher performance competencies, but soon those student learning goals which were called behavioral objectives came to be identified as student competency expectations. Competency-based

education is theoretically the cumulative product of student oriented behavioral objectives, individualized teacher training, and actual teacher job requirements. Based upon teacher-role variables, training programs have attempted to be accountable for insuring that graduates are competent in those activity and knowledge areas essential to adequate teacher performance. Few argue with the concept but little agreement can be found on the competencies to be specified and on the training methods required.

At first competencies were defined primarily in terms of knowledge areas required and bore much similarity to lists of modules used earlier in many teacher training programs. More recently increased efforts have been directed toward identifying performance competencies and devising programs for developing teacher skills through cooperative programs with public schools. Teacher education students in field-based programs are often sent to schools to develop and demonstrate teaching competencies. Varying degrees of supervision and varing levels of cooperating teacher quality have proven to be two major factors upon which program strength and, in fact, validity rest. Methods for insuring high quality, and thereby, adequate standards in these two areas are the subject of much debate and frequent "the way we do it" articles.

Much attention has been given to what teachers must know and to the competencies they must demonstrate (Mason & Palmatier, 1973). With elaborate specification most teacher education programs have redefined the content of courses in terms of teacher competencies to be developed through course activities. Although some withdrawal from the field and return to the campus has been evident, most programs continue to incorporate a significant amount of field-based activity in at least pre-service teacher

education programs. No one can argue with the logic of this movement and it fits in well with the accountability goals being espoused as a result of the current consumerism movement in education. But, have all the factors been considered?

Impact of Changes

Each of the "new" concepts in teacher education has moved the field toward greater concern with specifics. Individual student's, particular skill competencies, subject area specialization, and cook-book approaches to a plethora of teaching methods clearly emerge as the primary concerns.

Trends in public school management and instruction parallel the compartmentalization of individual learning aspects and students. Individualization often means learning alone with programmed material and little interaction with teacher and peers. Specialization has led to departmentalization, along traditional high school lines, at all levels including primary grades.

With greater emphasis on isolated skill proficiencies and subject area departmentalization has come a reduced concern for the "whole" student. No single individual is responsible for a student's learning; rather a file becomes the sole coordinating element in his or her educational development. Small wonder that student "functional" levels appear to be decreasing. With no teacher in a position to pull together isolated learning and to guide in the application of skills, the job is unlikely to be achieved. Years ago, psychological studies demonstrated that if transfer or generalization of learning is desired, instruction must include wide application of skills in a variety of situations (Travers, 1963). Without instructional management which allows a single teacher to guide students,

in such application across a wide range of subject areas, only limited transfer or generalization of learning is possible. Thus, when educational achievement is assessed through evaluation of application of skills in funtional tasks students often perform poorly.

This problem is not unique to elementary and secondary students. Public school administrators and supervisors frequently complain that new teacher education products are unable to teach except by using text books and carefully following the teacher's manual. They furthermore report that new teachers seem unable to provide alternative or follow-up instruction in cases where initial lesson activities do not result in mastery of skill objectives. Even a cursory look at teacher training techniques reveals little integration of skill and knowledge content. Methods are separated into subject area units and frequently not even closely related to the content courses of the teaching specialty. In addition few programs include work in general areas such as classroom management, discipline, evaluation techniques, grouping, mastery teaching, community relations, use of para-professionals, text and other material selection, etc. Much as public schools have come to place undo emphasis on isolated skill and knowledge units, teacher education has adopted a piecework concept of training. Each professor, supervisor, and cooperating teacher along the line views their tasks as vital, but most often not in terms of relationship to the finished product. Competent teachers can not be developed (or assembled) by a group of instructors working in the isolation of individual course and subject area blocks. A designer must take charge of conceptualizing and drawing up specifications for the end product. Only then will it be

possible to insure that the parts fit together to produce a functional product which meets consumer specifications. How is this to be achieved?

Methods for Regaining Perspective

A first step in restyling teacher education to produce an integrated and fully functional product is a market study. This must be done by each teacher training institution since demands upon teachers vary from geographical area to geographical area. Further, it may be found that no single type of teacher will do for all of the school situations within the college service area. A market study will include several aspects, among them might be:

(1) Survey of graduates employed as teachers for two or more years. Instrument should stress relationship between course work, practicum experiences, and job skills found to be necessary. Assessment of types of course and practicum offerings should be stressed rather than evaluation of professors.

(2) Survey of administrators and instructional supervisors in school districts where graduates have been employed. Information requested should include both knowledge and skill proficiency of graduates.

(3) Oral interaction with teachers, administrators, and supervisors in area served. Faculty members could lead discussions where school people are encouraged to advise on the content and methods of teacher education. An advisory council drawn from the college service area could function in this role.

(4) Classroom observation of teachers trained by the college. Faculty members, using a common observation scale, should view the results of

their training efforts. Such efforts should include teachers graduated over a period of several years in order to determine effect of current vs. former training practices.

(5) Parents should be interviewed to determine their perceptions of teachers and how they teach. Clarity of learning procedures, assignments, and purposes for learning should be given major emphasis.

(7) Achievement test scores might be used as one means for determining teacher quality. If other factors can be held equal it would be relevant to relate success as a teacher with teacher education course grades.

(8) Survey of major employers of public school graduates from the area to determine their view of the job teachers are doing. By looking at what potential employers see as student strengths and weaknesses it is often possible to determine areas in which teachers are proficient or deficient.

(9) Consolidate findings into listings of teacher weaknesses, teacher strengths, and desired teacher characteristics. From these a description of good teachers may be formulated.

Using a market survey format a consumer view will be established. From the overall and specific characteristics and skills indicated as essential in good teachers a program can be developed. To devise a program for training a model or models must be created. Just as a designer begins with a model of the finished product, teacher educators must determine what their final product is to be like. If more than a single type of teacher is to be prepared more than a single model must be developed. Unfortunately a teacher model cannot be the same sort of concrete creation a dress or automotive designer is able to construct. Rather the teacher model must be described

in a combination of knowledge, performance, and value characteristics. Several areas must be carefully defined:

(1) Philosophy toward children, subject area(s), and teaching.

(2) Knowledge and performance requirements in classroom management, student discipline, lesson planning, and instructional assessment techniques which are generalizeable across skill and content areas.

(3) Personal performance requirements in basic communication skills such as speaking, reading, writing, penmanship, and listening.

(4) Knowledge requirements in the basic student skill proficiency areas such as reading, speaking, writing, and listening (methods for both assessment and instruction should be included along with knowledge of norms for student proficiency at grade levels to be taught).

(5) Knowledge requirements in specific content subjects to be taught.

(6) Knowledge and performance requirements relative to developing a synthesis level of understanding and application of skills both within and across content areas.

(7) Knowledge and performance requirements in the areas of professional ethics, continuing education, position seeking, and professional involvement.

(8) Knowledge and performance requirements in the area of community relations, especially as related to working with students, parents, and co-workers.

Once the model is defined care must be taken to build a training program which develops teachers able to put all of the aspects together. If the various areas are developed in the sort of assembly line approach presently used little improvement will result. Obviously, this will require a new level of team effort on the part of teacher educators. Simply agreeing on the course requirements for degree and certification needs will not be sufficient. Instead new courses along with new training methods will be required.

A new partnership between colleges and public schools will be an essential ingredient in such a synthesized approach (Criscuolo, 1979). Without the acceptance of shared responsibility for the training of new teachers by those teachers currently practicing, teacher education programs cannot complete the training job. There must be a practicum setting in which the student is guided, through a modeling process, in the development of teacher performance competencies. It is also important that the college rethink the knowledge base required prior to placing teacher candidates in school practicum settings. Learning theorists have long affirmed that generalization and application of learnings is primarily dependent upon the existence of prerequisite learnings (Gagne, et. al, 1962) It is vital to insure that students are ready to practice and apply knowledge before placing them in field situations.

Finally teacher educators must return to the basic scholastic model for direction in developing the training program. To be good teachers individuals need to themselves possess characteristics of scholarship. A love of learning and knowledge of the techniques of learning are basic to scholarship. Since teachers must motivate their students in this direction it is essential that they themselves exhibit these characteristics. To achieve these qualities students need a solid grounding in the philosophy of education. Without a philosophy teachers enter classrooms unprepared to respond to student's questions concerning relevancy. To be a believable teacher demands a well thought out value system related to the skill or subject area being taught.

Conclusion

Teacher education has been responsive to demands for change. However, change tended to carry training toward over specification and isolation of skill and knowledge areas. Teacher education program faculty members have fallen into the tunnel vision syndrome familiar to assembly line workers. Assembly line workers can rely on the designer to worry about final product integration and quality. Teacher education faculty members are entrusted with both designer and production roles. They have neglected the designer role in movement toward delineation of specific competencies. Concrete performance tasks are always emphasized in such cases as they are easiest to describe and evaluate. More abstract variables like ethics, classroom management skill, public relations, and philosophy are usually neglected due to measurement difficulty and fear of infringement upon individual rights. Avoiding controversial areas does not help develop teachers who have their own views and approaches supported by a rationale assembled through various scholarly and practicum activities. To teach the "whole" child "whole" teachers are needed. Teacher education must seek to determine the "whole" and <u>then</u> specify instructional components rather than continuing to redefine, expand, and alter instructional approaches to the component parts. It is no longer acceptable to continue assembly line teacher education programs prior to completing a design of the finished product.

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